

THE WAR YEARS

The case of the young was serious. Always, they had gathered the upcoming generation to them at Grosvenor Road, young politicians, of any party young Trade Unionists, young journalists and literary and scientific workers of keen mind, young lecturers at the London School of Economics. Rows of young men who were to achieve distinction of some kind—W. H. Beveridge, R. H. Tawney, Arthur Salter, Walter Laverton, Arthur Steel-Maitland, Walter Elliot, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes—these, and dozens more, had been habitués, and even sat at their feet at one time or another. With young men, and, to a slightly less degree, with young women, Mrs. Webb, in particular, had a very happy touch. Her "young men," indeed, had been something of a friendly joke in the hey-day of the Minority Report agitation. Now, the breakaway was serious among the young, both in the Trade Union ranks, where Tom Mann was leading it, and among the intellectuals, where, even inside the Fabian Society, G. D. H. Cole and Clifford Allen were heading a new "reform" movement, within the citadel. Mrs. Webb's own connexion with the Fabian Society had, during the years between 1892 and 1912, been largely passive. She was, of course, a member, in 1907, she had suddenly leapt into action on the question of the equal status of women. But it was not until their return from the 1911 travels that she expressed a readiness to stand for the Executive. She was at once elected, with

a vote very nearly as large as that practically
unanimous
one given to her husband year after year,
ever since his
entry into the Society Once on, she
immediately began
to function The first fruit of her activity was
the establish-
ment of a Research Department, of a semi-
independent
kind, specially financed, and designed to
substitute organ-
ised, expert, collective research for the more or
less individual
research such as had given birth to nearly all
the Fabian